

Ward Two Planning Initiative: Shaping the Future for Somerville's Southern Edge

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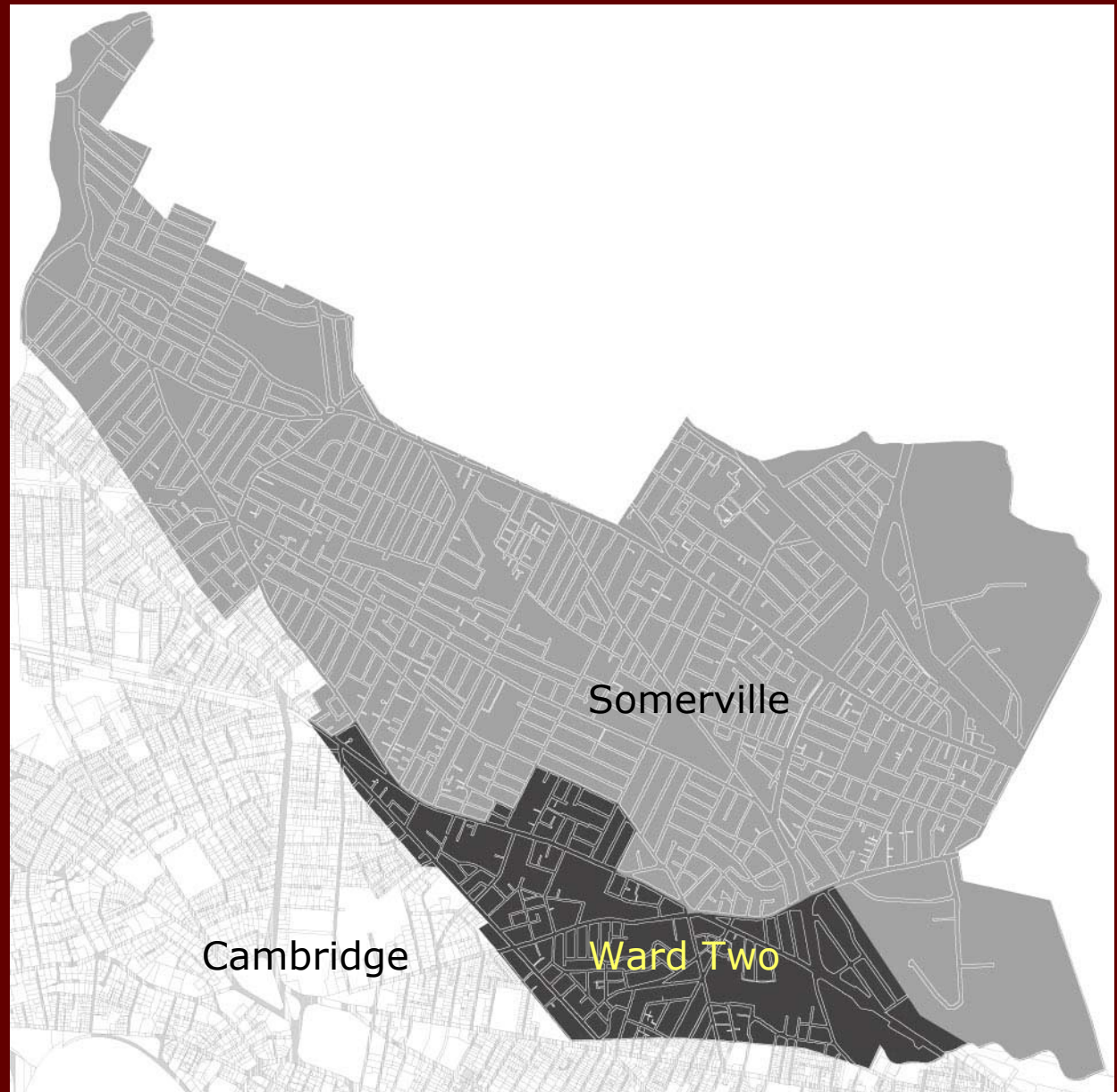
overview & goals

goal : improve pedestrian environment

goal : enhance design & aesthetics

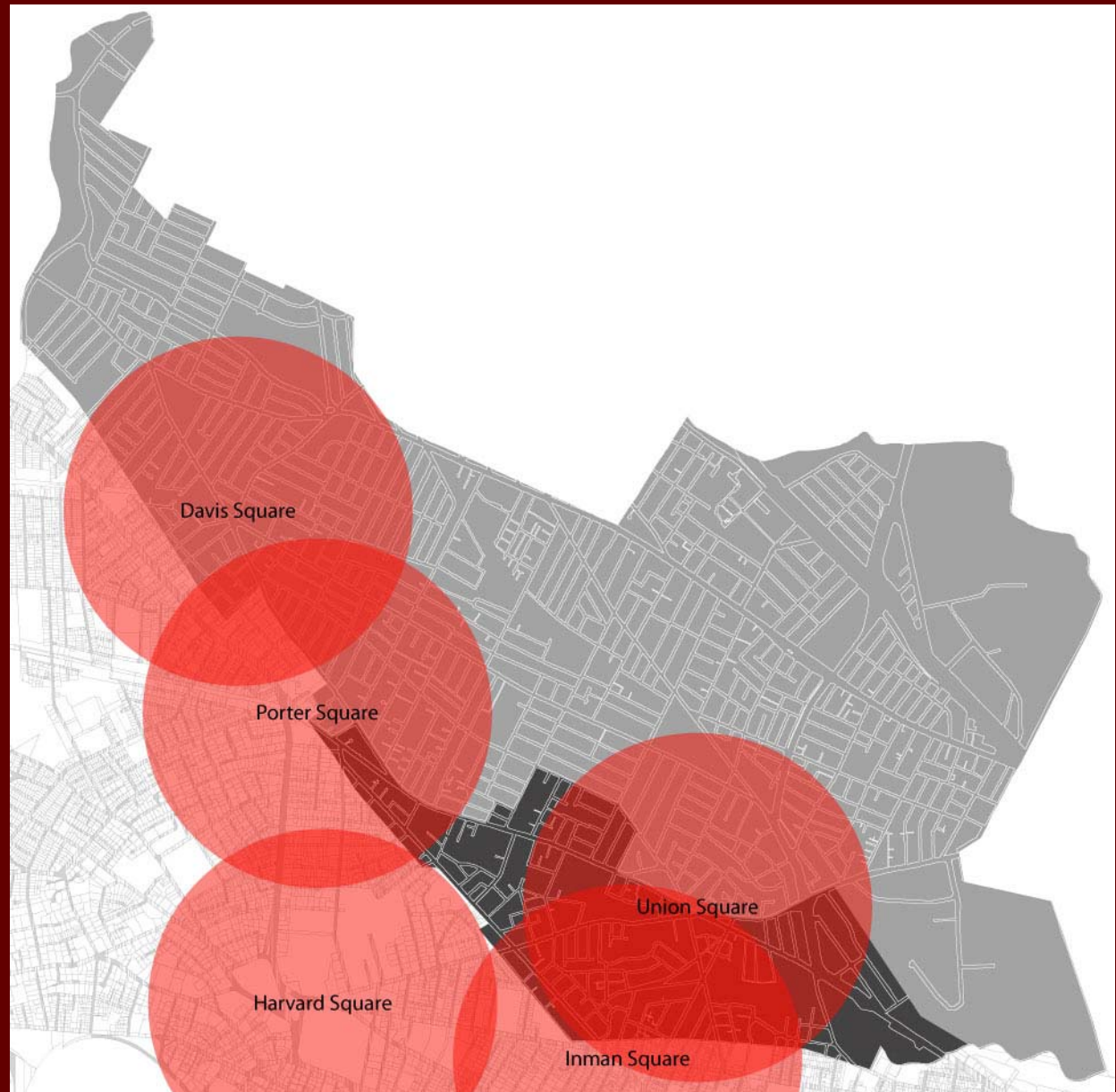
goal : encourage retail mix

Location



Location

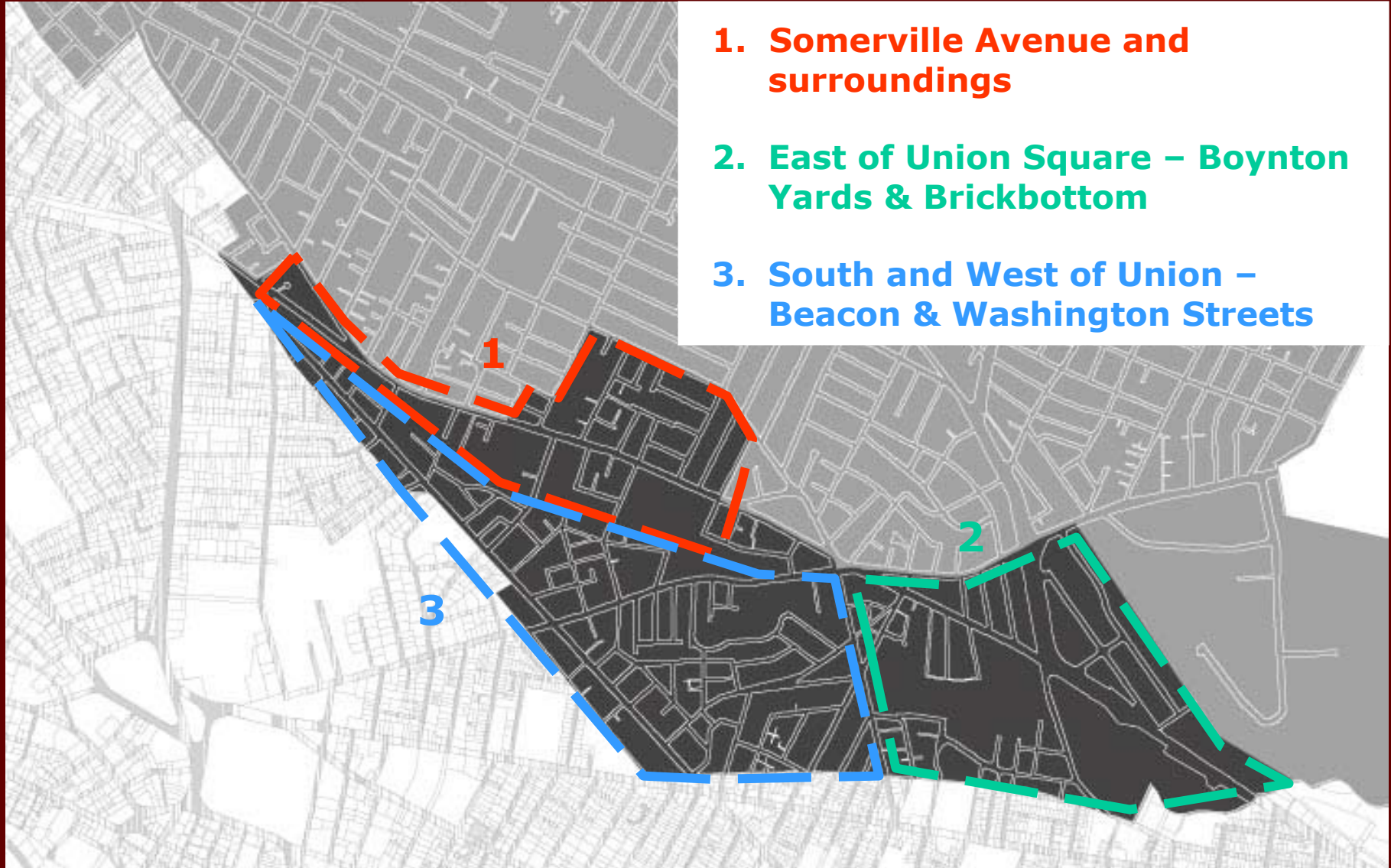
- Proximity to major squares in Somerville and Cambridge
- Distances
 - Porter Square to Union Square: 1.1m
 - Harvard Square to Porter Square: 1.05m
 - Harvard Square to Union Square: 1.28m
 - Inman Square to Union Square: .45m



10-minute walking radius

Planning Process

- Three areas of focus



Feedback from 11 May 2005

- Favorite places spread throughout the area



Most important areas for the future

- Concentrated: Wilson Sq, Park/Central Intersection & Union Sq



Challenging areas

- Concentrated: Wilson Square & Park/Central Intersection



Primary Goals

- Improve pedestrian environment

Create a safe and inviting pedestrian environment where residents and visitors will feel comfortable walking between Porter Square and Union Square

- Enhance design & aesthetics

Establish Somerville Avenue as an urban boulevard with distinctive architecture reflecting Somerville's history and creativity

- Encourage retail mix

Support existing commercial uses and encourage a better and more diverse mix of local, convenience and destination retail uses

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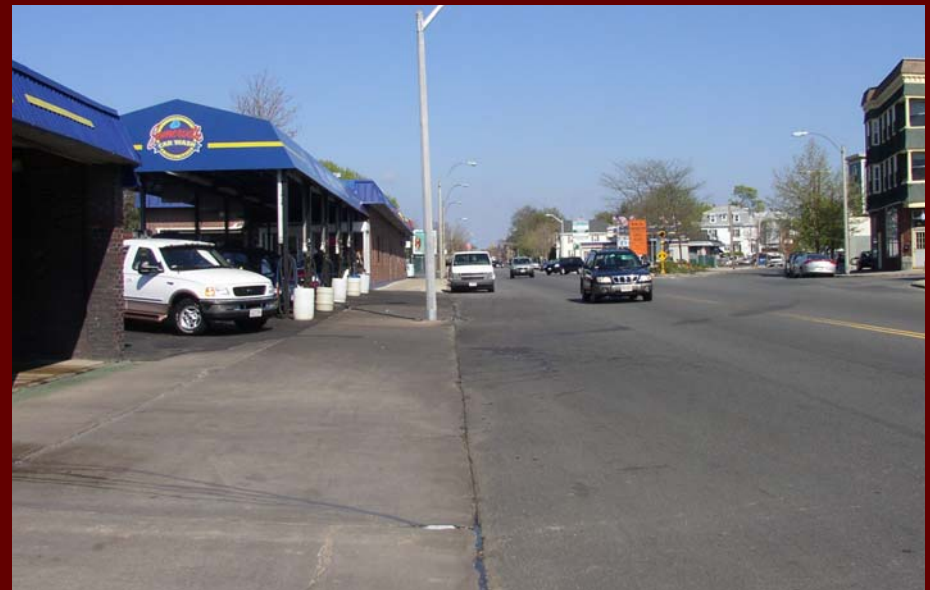
Community Feedback: What We Heard

- Improving the pedestrian environment includes:
 - Traffic calming
 - Streetscape improvements
- Trees are vital to building a better streetscape and creating the identity of the street
- Retail spaces and street furniture can provide spaces for people to gather and rest



Photo Journal

- Numerous curb cuts
- Many unfriendly areas for pedestrians



Learning from others...

- Signage
- Raised crossings
- Paving changes
- Lane shifts
- Curb extensions
- Street Furniture



City Strategies

Create a safe and inviting pedestrian environment where residents and visitors will feel comfortable walking between Porter Square and Union Square

▪ Strategies in motion

- Streetscape Improvement project
 - Sidewalk Improvements and improved crosswalks
 - Additional Trees (150+ total) and new benches and trash receptacles
 - Bike lane
 - Improved lighting (traffic & pedestrian scale) and additional traffic signals
 - Better signage for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians
- Enforcement of existing laws regarding speed and volume
- Improved appearance through street cleaning & prompt trash pick-up

▪ Next Steps

- New Bus Shelters on Somerville Avenue
- Green Line stop in Union Square
- Consideration of impacts of the Cambridge Truck Ban
- Development of Somerville Strategy for Truck Traffic

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Community Feedback: What We Heard

- Mixed-use buildings should be built out to the street, with higher densities keeping eyes on the streets and providing market base for more retail
- Parking should be provided behind buildings in lots or garages (e.g. Davis Square and Central Square)
- Depress the railroad and build on the air rights
- Importance of design review on Somerville Avenue

Photo Journal

- Parking fronting Somerville Avenue
- Unbroken facades
- Very few “open” buildings



Learning from others...

- Buildings built out to the sidewalk
- Glass facades
 - Require 50% glass on ground floor
 - Require each office/store to have a separate entrance facing the street
- Parking lots or garages behind structures



City Strategies

Establish Somerville Avenue as an urban boulevard with distinctive architecture reflecting Somerville's history and creativity

- **Strategies in motion**

- Streetscape Improvement Project
- Encourage participation in storefront improvement project
- Design Review Committee

- **Next Steps**

- Consider creation of design guidelines for Somerville Avenue
- Examine zoning on Somerville Avenue
- Work with owners of historic properties to encourage rehabilitations
- Promote innovative design



overview & goals

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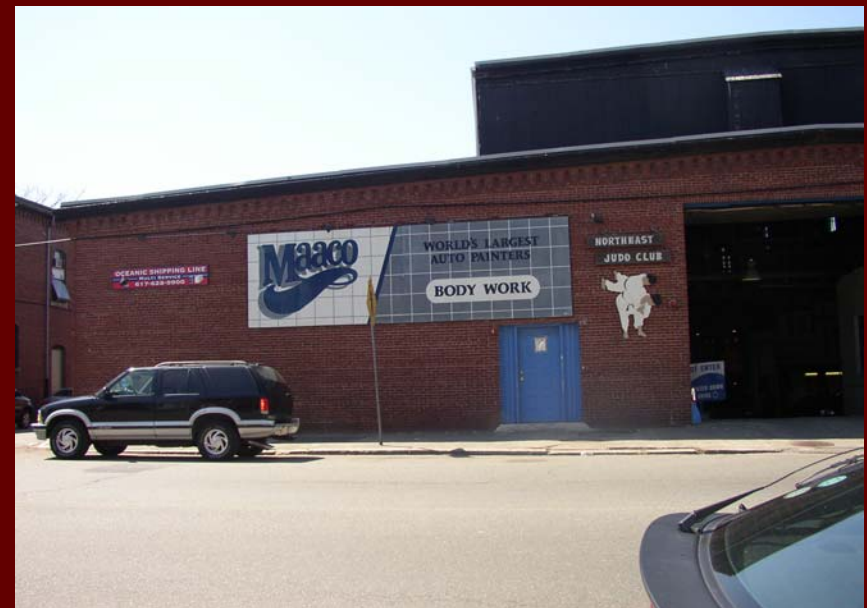
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Community Feedback: What We Heard

- Commercial/retail on the first floor with residential above
 - Small commercial/retail spaces provide spots for people to gather and rest
 - Parking should be provided behind buildings in lots or garages (e.g. Davis Square & Central Square)
 - Tax incentive for business owners to be Somerville residents
 - An ice cream store near Conway Park would be a desirable use
 - More restaurants are needed to animate street life and provide a mix
-
- Massachusetts Avenue from Harvard Sq to Porter Sq & in Central Sq is a good model of mixtures of housing and residential

Photo Journal



Learning from others...

- Conduct a full assessment of existing retail; identify possible niche markets and gaps in service
- With brokers, market available retail space
- Focus grants/loans to attract target businesses
- Develop retail incubation space that provides low rents and support services (entrepreneurial training)
- Develop entry-level retail opportunities (sidewalk vending, kiosks)



Learning from others...

- Modify Zoning to require first floor retail
 - Define a set of “desired” ground floor uses
 - Provide limited zoning incentives for provision of those desired uses
- Enact moratorium on certain types of uses (e.g. auto-related)
- Provide and manage infrastructure needed to support retail (parking areas, trash receptacles, etc.)



City Strategies

Support existing commercial uses and encourage a better and more diverse mix of local, convenience and destination retail uses

- **Strategies in motion**

- Encourage participation in storefront improvement project

- **Next Steps**

- Examine zoning on Somerville Avenue
 - Assess existing uses and identify desirable uses
 - Promote and Market the area
 - Main streets and/or Chamber of Commerce
 - Targeted redevelopment of strategic sites
 - Encourage use of sidewalks for outdoor seating
 - Partner with brokers to identify and market properties suitable for retail use

Wrap up

- Next set of meetings
 - Boynton Yards & Brickbottom (area East of Prospect Street)
 - June 15 & June 29
 - Washington & Beacon Streets (area West of Prospect, South of tracks)
 - September 14 & 28
- **WARD-WIDE WRAP-UP MEETING**
 - October 12